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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 04 HANOI 002762

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USAID WASHDC
USAID/RDM-A/BANGKOK PRIORITY

SENSITIVE

STATE FOR G; CA/OCS/ACS/EAP; EAP/EX; EAP/BCLTV; EAP/EP; INR;
OES/STC (PBATES); OES/IHA (DSINGER AND NCOMELLA)
BANGKOK FOR RMO, CDC, USAID/RDM/A (MFRIEDMAN)
USDA FOR FAS/PASS TO APHIS
DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE FOR OSD/ISA/AP (LSTERN)
USAID FOR ANE AND GH (DCAROLL, SCLEMENTS AND PCHAPLIN)
STATE PASS USTR (ELENA BRYAN)
STATE ALSO PASS HHS/OGHA (EELVANDER)
ROME FOR FAO

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [AMED](#) [AMGT](#) [CASC](#) [EAGR](#) [PINR](#) [SOCI](#) [PGOV](#) [TBIO](#) [VM](#) [AFLU](#)
SUBJECT: VIETNAM: AVIAN INFLUENZA WEEKLY REPORT FOR OCTOBER
20, 2005

REF: A) Hanoi 2655 and previous

[1](#)1. (U) Summary. There have been no new cases of human Avian Influenza (AI) reported since Mission Vietnam's last weekly update on October 13 (reftel). The Government of Vietnam (GVN) is showing increasing commitment to deal seriously with AI. The level of direct involvement in dealing with a potential AI pandemic has risen to the Office of Prime Minister and the chain of command has been streamlined. Secretary of Health and Human Services Michael Leavitt and

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his delegation met with GVN officials to discuss the AI situation firsthand during their four day visit to Hanoi. Poultry vaccinations continue in Vietnam and the need for assistance to increase lab capacity and provide 20,000-30,000 injector guns was highlighted during U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Undersecretary James Butler's visit. The Embassy and Consulate General held AI Town Hall Meetings for American citizens. End Summary.

No New Human Cases

[1](#)2. (U) There have been no new human AI cases since August
[1](#)29.

The Level of Concern for AI is High

[1](#)3. (SBU) Over the past week, it has become clear that the level of concern for an AI epidemic has risen to the Office of Prime Minister and the chain of command has been streamlined. The GVN has named Deputy Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung as chair of a National Steering Committee for AI Control, which is currently finalizing a draft Emergency Action Plan for Vietnam. Furthermore, Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD) Cao Duc Phat has been assigned an AI coordinating role that expands beyond MARD. (Note: Mission will provide comment on the draft AI Emergency Action Plan once it has been translated and received. End note.)

[1](#)4. (U) Prime Minister Phan Van Khai issued a directive for all concerned ministries, agencies and sectors on October 15 to urgently develop and implement their respective action plans. The directive expands the GVN's contingency planning beyond the Ministries of Health (MOH) and MARD to include the Ministries of Culture and Information, Public Security, and Transportation.

READY OR NOT...

[1](#)5. (SBU) Several GVN officials have directly indicated that Vietnam is ill-prepared for a widespread AI pandemic, such as a worst case scenario where ten percent of the population is infected with Avian Influenza. During a side conversation at an AI Donor Meeting October 13, MARD Minister Phat specifically told the Deputy Chief of Mission (DCM) that Vietnam does not have sufficient stockpiles of Tamiflu and respirators to respond to more than a few AI cases at the same time. For example, in high-risk areas such as Haiphong Province in northern Vietnam, there are approximately 20 respirators for a population of nearly 700,000 people.

PRESS REPORTS ON AI

16. (U) The press has also reported on the potential effects to the healthcare system. The Ministry of Health (MOH) has directed hospitals to set up steering boards against bird flu, build isolation rooms for bird flu patients, and prepare a sufficient supply of standard equipment amidst the threat of bird flu outbreaks. MOH also urged hospitals at all levels to obtain adequate reserves of anti-bird flu drugs and supplies of medical equipment in order to provide immediate treatment to patients. The Associated Press quoted Deputy Head of Haiphong Department of Preventative Medicine Dr. Le Thi Song Huong (translated), "We can cope with a small-scale epidemic, as it has already happened over the past two years, (but if a pandemic occurs), we don't know what to do."

17. (U) Quoting Ho Chi Minh City Health Service Vice-Director Dr. Le Truong Giang, the Nguoi Lao Dong Daily said that an AI preparedness plan has been issued to all local related agencies in Ho Chi Minh City. The plan is focused on the quarantine and monitoring systems at the district healthcare level. Press reports indicate that Ho Chi Minh City is importing 14 kilograms of Tamiflu powder as part of its AI preparedness plan. According to Giang, however, this amount of Tamiflu, in addition to 1,000 courses of Tamiflu that Ho Chi Minh City has already stockpiled, is only enough to cope with a pandemic of approximately 15,000 people.

HHS Secretary Leavitt Visit to Vietnam

18. (U) U.S. Health and Human Services (HHS) Secretary Michael Leavitt and his delegation of AI experts visited Vietnam October 15-18. The Secretary met with MOH, MARD, Vietnam's National Institute of Hygiene and Epidemiology (NIHE), Haiphong People's Committee, Haiphong Health Department and Hospital, and toured an HHS/CDC funded HIV/AIDS Voluntary Counseling and Testing Center (septels). The Secretary also visited a Hanoi wet market and met with a family that had contracted and survived AI during his four day visit.

19. (U) The Secretary's delegation included: Undersecretary of State for Global Affairs Paula Dobriansky, HHS Deputy Chief of Staff Kerry Weems, U.S. Agency for International Development Assistant Administrator Kent Hill, USDA Undersecretary James Butler, Center for Disease Control Director Julie Gerberding, National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases Director Anthony Fauci, HHS National Vaccine Program Office Director Bruce Gellin, HHS Assistant Secretary Suzy De Francis, HHS Special Assistant (S/A)

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Steiger, Department of State S/A Turekian, and HHS S/A Bell.

Poultry Vaccination Program Update

10. (U) According to Vietnam News, the GVN has spent VND 700 billion (USD 44.3 million) for the national vaccination program, and has vaccinated 50 million birds to date. The program plans to vaccinate an additional 100 million in November. According to the World Bank, the GVN is in the process of purchasing an additional 260 million doses. Since winter 2004, the GVN has implemented a three-prong strategy to prevent new outbreaks of AI in poultry and waterfowl, namely culling, bio-security and movement control and large-scale vaccination campaign for domestic poultry and ducks.

11. (SBU) USDA Undersecretary James Butler observed poultry vaccinations in Bac Ninh province and had discussions with officials from MARD's Department of Animal Health (DAH) on October 12. Butler's visit was useful in defining USDA's role in assisting Vietnam's AI control program. USDA APHIS Epidemiologist Dr. Cheryl Hall, who has expertise in training in real time PCR (a diagnostic test), will be posted to Hanoi as an Embassy Science Fellow. DAH currently has one laboratory capable of real time PCR, but needs to extend the capability to two more labs. The additional equipment and supplies for this expansion would cost in total \$100,000 to \$150,000. (Note: Embassy believes that USDA should consider providing equipment along with a laboratory expert. USDA could also use its AI funding to replace some of the inadequate Chinese injection guns being used in the vaccination program with better American models. FAO has identified 2 suppliers in Europe to provide better guns but it will probably take additional suppliers to quickly procure 20,000-30,000 vaccination guns Vietnam needs. End Note)

U.S. and Other Donor Assistance and Coordination

12. (U) The United Nations Resident Representative hosted a meeting of resident ambassadors in Vietnam on October 17 to discuss AI issues with the new Global Coordinator for AI

David Navarro. Navarro spoke about the importance of donor coordination and of balancing short-term efforts with medium to long-term planning. He encouraged support for the upcoming November 7-9 meeting of international donors which will determine the principles for AI funding distribution and establish a mechanism for donor communication.

AI Town Hall Meetings

13. (SBU) The DCM hosted an AI preparedness "Town Hall Meeting" for private American citizens and representatives of U.S. companies on October 19 (septel). Sponsored by AmCham, there were more than 100 and others present. During a side conversation, SOS, a private clinic serving the expatriate community, said they were informed by Roche Drug Company on October 14 that they will not be able deliver their current Tamiflu order. Roche told SOS that the GVN was "taking" the drugs for their use in the country. (Note: This is unconfirmed but likely an indication of the GVN's efforts to stockpile Tamiflu under Central Government control. End Note.)

14. (U) In Ho Chi Minh City, the U.S. Consulate General also gave an AI presentation to approximately 110 AmCham members. The session touched on what is known about AI in Vietnam, fact vs. speculation, and the ConGen's own plans and responsibilities to the Amcit community in case of a broader AI outbreak. ConGen's medical staff was on hand to give an overview of causes of, symptoms of, and preparedness for AI, including a summary of Tamiflu's potential role in treatment and prophylaxis. The presentation was followed by a question and answer period, during which AmCham members raised a wide range of issues, including alternatives to Tamiflu, flu shots, and the Consulate's warden system.

BOARDMAN